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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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May 14, 1975

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Your letter of April 16 requested the text of all documents regarding the negotiation and subsequent implementation of the 1973 Paris Agreement on Vietnam. This request was based on the possible relevance to your Committee's hearings of the nature and extent of any U.S. understandings or commitments which may have been given to North or South Vietnam.

Unfortunately, intervening events delayed a response to your letter, and those events have now made it unnecessary for the Congress to consider further the Administration's request of April 10 for additional military assistance to South Vietnam.

With specific reference to your concern about private U.S. commitments to South Vietnam, you will recall that President Nixon and members of his Administration stated publicly and repeatedly that the U.S. intended to continue its aid relationship with the Republic of Vietnam and react vigorously to violations of the ceasefire agreement. Diplomatic exchanges reflected this policy and the intent to maintain the conditions essential to observance of the Agreement. Requests for security assistance and opposition to the 1973 prohibition on the use of military force were presented and argued on the merits of policy, in the belief that it was in our national interest to maintain the conditions necessary to the viability of the Agreement. Our policy and our actions in Indochina were determined by this view of our interests, not by commitments or assurances given only in private

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documents. Obviously, our ability to carry out this policy was subject to our own Constitutional process.

Since the subject matter of the documents you requested and indeed the debate over them is no longer a relevant issue, I consider our urgent task now is to face the future and leave the divisive debates over Vietnam behind us. I ask your help in this effort.

Sincerely,

Gerald R. Ford

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The Honorable John Stennis
United States Senate
Washington, D. C. 20510

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